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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 17 times a year on Fridays to our print and online readership of more than 100,000. The newspaper is a labor of love by a network of volunteers who do all of the reporting, writing, photography, illustration, editing, designing, distribution, fundraising and website management. Since 2000, more than 600 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have contributed their energy to this project. Winner of dozens of New York Community Media Alliance awards, The Indypendent is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging people to produce their own media. The Indypendent is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising from organizations with similar missions. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a global lens, exploring how systems of power - economic, political and social — affect the lives of ordinary people. The Indypendent reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Indypendent is the newspaper project of the New York City Independent Media Center, which is affiliated with the global Indymedia movement (indymedia.org), an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production. NYC IMC sponsors three other volunteer projects: the children's newspaper IndyKids, the IndyVideo news team and the NYC IMC open publishing website (nyc.indymedia.org).

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Find *The Indypendent* online on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter!

## community calendar

Please send event announcements to indyevents@gmail.com The next deadline is May 6.

#### MON APR 20

6:30pm-9pm • FREE
DISCUSSION: THE MOVEMENT 40
YEARS AFTER STONEWALL. With
so much talk going on about lowa and
Vermont, it's easy for some to forget the
40 years of queer radical movements that
have paved the way to open discussion.
LGBT Community Center,
208 W 13th St (btw 7th & 8th Aves)
gaycenter.org • 212-620-7310

#### MON APR 20

6:30pm • FREE

FILM: "FARMINGVILLE." Stories of residents, day laborers and activists on all sides of the immigration discussion after the attempted murder of two Mexican day laborers in a small Long Island town in 2000. RSVP requested.

Lower East Side Tenement Museum Shop, 108 Orchard St (at Delancey St) events@tenement.org • 212-982-8420

#### WED APR 22

2pm • FREE
ACTION: WALKOUT AND RALLY
AGAINSTTUITION INCREASES. On the
40th anniversary of the 1969 Open Admissions Strike, speak out and tell CUNY
to put an end to budget cuts and tuition
hikes to make sure that all students receive a quality education at an affordable
rate. Sponsored by City College Students
for Educational Rights.
CUNY Campuses (City-wide)
cocoreed@gmail.com

7pm • FREE
READING/GALLERY: "EINSTEIN
AND ROBESON ON WITHERSPOON
STREET." Fred Jerome and Rodger
Taylor, authors of "Einstein on Race and
Racism" will speak about their book,
about the Einstein overlooked by biographers and the ongoing Bronfman Center
Gallery exhibition that was inspired by
their work. Bronfman Center Gallery, 1st
Floor, 7 E 10th St,
nyu.edu/bronfman • 212-998-4122

#### FRI APR 24

8:30pm • FREE

FILM: "STILL WE RIDE." After Manhattan Critical Mass bike ride, join the NYU Earth Matters Environmental Club for a screening of "Still We Ride," a chronicle of the police crackdown on the monthly ride since the 2004 Republican National Convention. Snacks will be provided.

Bring a photo ID to get into building. Kimmel Center, NYU, 60 Washington Sq South, Rm 802 stillweridethemovie.com times-up.org

#### FRI APR 24

7:30pm-9pm • \$25
BENEFIT: FOR A BETTER BRONX. For A Better Bronx has been fighting for environmental justice in the South Bronx since 1991, and securing victories in organizing against systemic oppression of low-income people and communities of color every step of the way.

St Luke's Church Social Hall,
623 E 138th St, Brx forabetterbronx.org • 718-292-4344 marian.jabib@earthlink.net

#### **SUN APR 26**

3pm-7pm • FREE

EVENT: REALLY REALLY FREE MARKET: THIS AIN'T YOUR GRANNY'S FLEA MARKET. For a taste of non-capitalist (really, really) free trade, check this out. Bring clothes, food and services to share, or stop by and take what you'd like. Judson Memorial Church, 55 Washington Sq S • inourhearts@gmail.com

#### **TUE APR 28**

7pm • FREE

ACTION: "TAKE BACKTHE NIGHT MARCH AND SPEAKOUT." Celebrate women and men who have survived sexual assault, rape and violence. March to assert every person's right to safety, and speak out to share your experiences and embrace being a survivor.

Meet at Washington Sq Park,
March at 8pm • shahida.arabi@nyu.edu
Julie: 917-499-6065

#### WED APR 29

6pm-8pm • FREE
FORUM: "RACE MATTERS — THE
DEATH PENALTY AND THE INCREDIBLE
CASE OF MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!" Join
an amazing panel of anti-death penalty
activists to discuss the role that race
plays in our justice system and death
penalty legislation, in conjunction with
a release event for Mumia's new book,
Jailhouse Lawyers.

Newark Public Library, 4th Fl, 5 Washington St, Newark, NJ info@freemumia.com • 201-602-0780 freemumia.com

#### FRI MAY 1

Noon • FREE RALLY: MARCH FOR I

RALLY: MARCH FOR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS ON MAY DAY! Rally and march

to put an end to deportations and illegal raids and to call for humane immigration reform.

Meet at Union Square, Broadway & 14th may1.info • 212-561-1744

#### SAT MAY 2

10am-4pm • FREE
RECYCLE: COMPUTER AND
ELECTRONICS. Drop off your old
television sets, printers, laptops, radios,
cell phones, disks, wires and computers.
Sponsored by the Lower East Side
Ecology Center and the Central Park
Conservancy.

119 W 23rd Street, (at Tekserve btw 6 & 7th Aves), lesecologycenter.org

#### TUE MAY 5

7pm-8pm • FREE
READING/DISCUSSION: "QUIVERFULL." Author Katherine Joyce
introduces readers to a new generation
of fundamentalist Christian women who
proclaim self-sacrifice and submission
as model virtues of womanhood and as
warfare on behalf of Christ.
McNally Jackson, 52 Prince St (btwn
Lafayette & Mulberry)
mcnallyjackson.com • 212-274-1160

#### FRI MAY 15

7pm • FREE DISCUSSION: "FIRE THE BOSS: THE

WORKER CONTROL SOLUTION FROM BUENOS AIRES TO CHICAGO." Join Naomi Klein, workers from Chicago's Republic Windows and Doors and activists from all around the world as they discuss how to take back control and put it back in the hands of the people who really deserve it.

Cooper Union Great Hall, 7 E7th St (btw

Cooper Union Great Hall, 7 E 7th St (bt 3rd Ave & Cooper Sq)
haymarketbooks.org.

6pm-9pm • \$10-\$20 Sliding Scale
BENEFIT: "RADICAL COLORING BOOK
LAUNCH PARTY." Help kids rebel against
oppression while cluctching a Crayola!
Celebrate four years of IndyKids with the
launch of, "Coloring Outside the Lines,"
featuring scenes inspired from political
protests and history. Free food, drink,
crayons and radical folk music provided.
145 west 122nd St, Apt 3. (Btw Lenox and
Adam Clayton Powell). indykids.net
indykids@indymedia.org • 212-592-0116

#### SUN MAY 17

Noon • FREE

EVENT: SECOND ANNUAL VEGGIE PRIDE PARADE. Celebrate the vegetarian lifestyle all things that grow. Olde Meat District, Gansevoort St & 9th Ave,

veggieprideparade.org • 212-242-0011

#### reader comments

#### SEX WORKERS A NEED VOICE Rectioned to "A Feminist's Look

Response to "A Feminist's Look at Climate Change," March 20:

I find it problematic that you are including Robert Jensen as a commentator in your newspaper. Jensen is a proponent of what is called "rescue feminism" or "radical feminism," meaning that he does not support sex workers' rights or harm reduction in the sex industry. At one time, The Indypendent contained an actual sex worker column. Whatever happened to that? In the future, The Indypendent should feature the voices and concerns of sex workers instead of the pseudopsychology of so-called "radical feminists" like Jensen.

—Susan from Staten Island

#### BRING LABOR MOVEMENT BACK

Response to "Battle in the Bronx," March 20:

Real wages for working people in this country have been stagnant since the 1970s. Why? Because labor was defeated and the labor movement that remained climbed into bed with management. We are facing some hard times, some brutal austerity and these brave workers are taking it on the chin for all of us. We all need to come together and support them, whatever our differences over strategy. They have showed remarkable unity and solidarity in this effort; can we not do the same? Their fight is our fight.

—Ветн

## DOB MAKING IT EASY TO CHEAT

Response to "New Rules Favor Developers, Critics Charge," March 20:

While the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) has updated their website to deliver more information more efficiently, it currently does not have drawings (plans) available online and is not planning to do so in the near future. Many times illegal construction doesn't become evident from the application and schematic and viewing of full plans is crucial. Plans can be viewed at DOB. Aside from being a time-consuming task (two to four hours), many times plans are not available for one reason

or another weeks at a time. The 30-day deadline will make it a lot easier to hide illegal construction and to legalize it after the public comment period has expired.

-LOCAL RESIDENT





RIL 17 – MAY 14, 2009 THE

By Steven Wishnia

ew York State has enacted major changes in its Rockefeller drug laws, which contain some of the harshest mandatory minimum sentences in the nation. The activists who've been trying to repeal those laws for years say it's a very welcome move but doesn't go far enough.

"I think it's a really positive step forward. It is not the end of the Rockefeller drug laws, but hopefully, it's the beginning of the end," says Caitlin Dunklee of the Drop the Rock campaign, an umbrella group campaigning to repeal the laws. The group estimates that the new law might divert half the state's convicted drug felons into treatment or other alternatives to prison.

The changes were put into the state's budget as part of a March 25 deal among Gov. David Paterson, state Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver.

The new law eliminates the mandatory minimum of a year in prison for first of-fenders charged with small-time dealing (Class B felonies, such as sale of up to a half-ounce of cocaine or heroin, or possession with intent to sell) and first or second offenders charged with lesser felonies (such as possession of a half-gram of cocaine or sale of an ounce of marijuana). It also expands drug treatment and other alternatives to incarceration. Second offenders charged with B felonies, who now face an automatic four-and-a-half to five-year sentence, might be able to get treatment instead of prison if they can prove they're drug-dependent.

On the other hand, the bill retains the mandatory-minimum sentences for all other accused dealers, and only about one-eighth of the state's 13,400 drug prisoners will be able to apply for reduced sentences. The bill also revives the 1973 Rockefeller law's original 15-to-life sentences, this time for "kingpins" convicted of selling more than \$75,000 worth of drugs.

Paterson is a longtime critic of the Rockefeller laws and was arrested at a civil-disobedience protest against them in 2002, but he has taken a more cautious stance since he became governor. According to spokesperson Marissa Shorenstein, he insisted that accused drug offenders who wanted treatment instead of prison would have to plead guilty first, on the grounds that the threat of prison would make drug users more likely to stick with treatment. The governor's philosophy is "treat, don't punish, but treat to be effective," Shorenstein explains.

The state's prosecutors largely opposed easing the law. And the *Daily News* called the proposed changes the "Drug Dealer Protection Act" and said they would unleash a crime wave.

Enacted in 1973 under Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, the laws mandated 15-years-to-life sentence for the sale of two ounces or more of heroin or cocaine or for possession of four ounces. The state enacted mild reforms in 2004 and 2005. Those reduced the 15-to-life sentences to eight to 20 years, but did not affect the 90 percent of drug prisoners convicted of lesser charges.

Critics charged that the laws were "unjust and racially targeted," as Linda Dechabert, head of Exponents, a harm-reduction group working with drug addicts, ex-prisoners and people with AIDS, put it at the March 25 rally.

More than 90 percent of New York's drug prisoners are black or Latino, and about 40 percent are incarcerated for possession charges. The racial disparities most likely stem from the ecology of the drug trade — ghetto street dealers are more visible and violent than discreet white-collar dealers — and the cumulative effects of racism in who gets stopped, who gets prosecuted and who gets imprisoned.

"It's easy to arrest blacks and Latinos because they're in a confined area," notes Carl Dukes, 64, an ex-prisoner who attended the rally.

Activists developed four "pillars" for further-reaching reforms: restoring judicial discretion, expanding treatment and alternatives to prison, reducing sentences — and retroactivity — letting prisoners apply for the sentences they would have gotten under the revised laws.

By those standards, the new law does improve treatment services. It's expected to provide up to \$80 million more for rehab and alternatives-to-incarceration programs, such as the one run by the Kings County District Attorney's office. New York has a harm-reduction system well positioned to take advantage of this, notes Gabriel Sayegh of the Drug Policy Alliance, as there are well-established programs for drug rehab, needle exchange, methadone maintenance and overdose prevention.

Most activists agree, however, that the bill falls short on judicial discretion and retroactivity. It also does not change the practice of determining penalties by the weight of the drugs seized rather than by the defendant's role in the deal.

"It's unfair. You're caught with a little amount of drugs and you serve a long, long term in prison," says former prisoner Ashley O'Donoghue. "It should be retroactive so the people who are still there can get a sentence that's more suitable for what they did."

O'Donoghue, now 26, was arrested in 2003 when two white college students he'd been dealing grams of cocaine to were nabbed and set him up for a two-and-a-half ounce sale, well above his usual range. Facing 15 years to life, he pleaded guilty to a B felony and served five years of a 7-to-21-year sentence.

"We're not saying people should not go to prison," says Robert Gangi of the Correctional Association of New York, the prison-reform group behind Drop the Rock. "We're saying the judge should decide."

Comedian Randy Credico, a longtime drug-law activist who attended the March an honest politician," said the changes are

inadequate because retroactive resentencing is not "automatic." Less than half the 1,000 prisoners eligible to apply for shorter sentences under the 2004 law actually got them.

Nicholas Eyle of Reconsider, a Syracuse-based anti-prohibition group, is also not enthusiastic. "I don't want to sound like I don't support the change, but I'm not that excited," he says. "I'm not a fan of mandatory treatment." Though rehab is preferable to prison, he says, most people arrested on drug charges are not addicts.

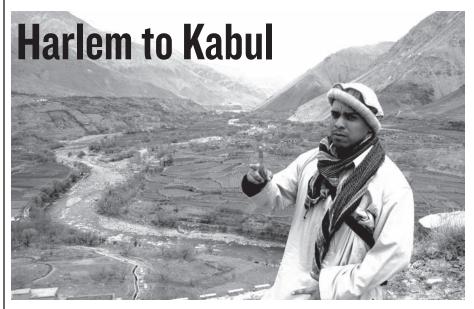
"If you want to save money and reduce crime," Eyle says, "end prohibition. If you question the fundamentals, you have to conclude that prohibition doesn't work."

Many activists believe that upstate Republicans oppose reducing drug sentences because prisons are one of the few sources of steady jobs in the region. When the Rockefeller laws passed, New York had 18 prisons. From 1973 to 1999, it built 51 new ones.

Eyle disputes that notion. Though some rural legislators have complained that closing prisons would cost jobs in their districts, he says they're not a "strong enough lobby" to preserve the drug laws.

For others, economics abetted change. At \$45,000 per inmate, Speaker Silver said in a statement, it costs New York more than \$500 million each year to imprison drug offenders. The minimal changes enacted in 2004 have saved the state \$100 million, he added.

Nonetheless, some politicians in New York State see the issue as one of principle. "My Assembly colleagues and I continue in our pledge not to give up our fight for greater reform of New York State's ineffective and imprudent drug laws," Assembly Corrections Committee Chair Jeffrion Aubry (D-Queens), a longtime advocate of repealing the Rockefeller laws, said in a statement after the deal was announced. "While today's agreement brings us closer to our goal, we recognize the need to do more."



arlem rapper and activist Immortal Technique recently returned from a three week trip to Afghanistan, where he helped create the Amin Institute in Kabul, which includes an orphanage, school and medical center. He chose Afghanistan, so that it would to set an example for others. "If it can be successful there despite the obvious danger," he told *The Indypendent*, "then we can succeed in anything. Why not repeat this experiment here in New York, Detroit, Florida, Columbus and other countries across the globe?" He teamed up with the California-based charity Omeid International for the project, helping raise close to \$50,000 through benefits and concerts. To read the full article, visit indypendent.org.

—JAISAL NOOR

PHOTO COURTESY OF IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE

# **Working to Reclaim May Day**

he government has committed trillions of dollars to bail out Wall Street in less than a year. And as the Obama administration and the corporate elite bicker over what money goes where, those most affected by the economic crisis have been seemingly shut out of negotiations.

Caught in between the fingerpointing and bank bailouts are the communities that are absorbing the brunt of foreclosures and rising unemployment. But this May 1, the unemployed, the homeless and immigrants are taking their demands to the streets.

The New York May 1st Coalition, a committee of more than 40 immigrant and worker rights organizations in the New York region, will rally at noon at Union Square to celebrate International Workers' Day (May Day) and to hold President Barack Obama accountable on his 100th day in office.

May Day is a holiday to honor the social and economic achievements of labor movements worldwide, and is a day to rally for ongoing struggles. The day was immoralized by the chaos and violence during a massive labor rally in Chicago's Haymarket Square May 4, 1886. The holiday, however, has since lost much of its significance within the United

In 2006, 120 years later, factory workers were joined by social justice advocates and immigrants in what became known as "A Day Without an Immigrant."

"It was almost natural for the immigrant rights movement, that was basically a working-class movement, to have chosen that day, and almost resurrected it here in the U.S.," said Juan Gonzalez, co-host of Democracy Now! and columnist for the New York Daily News, who has written extensively on immigration issues.

On May 1, 2006, thousands of stores were closed and factories were halted as millions of immigrants across 200 cities boycotted work and marched into the streets. This outpouring helped defeat the Sensenbrenner bill (H.R. 4437), which would have made it a felony to be in the United States without documents and applied criminal sanctions against anyone who provided services to the undocumented.

"In 2006 we were victorious," said Teresa Gutierrez, a coordinator with the May 1st Coalition and Workers World Party Secretariat member. "We did stop the Sensenbrenner legislation." But the following years brought only reprisals from the Bush administration, said Gutierrez. "There was further repression through raids, deportation, the empowerment of local law enforcements to hunt down immigrants, [engage in] racial profiling and so forth," she said.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) reported that 349,041 immigrants were deported in 2008, up drastically from 195,024 in 2006.

This year, immigrant rights activists hope to make Obama fulfill his promise to pass comprehensive immigration reform. The May 1st Coalition is demanding an end to raids and deportations, and the legalization of the more than 12 million estimated undocumented immigrants in the United States.

But this year, in light of skyrocketing unemployment numbers, waves of foreclosures and the state of the current economy, immigrants will not be marching alone. "The economy will help mobilize more people because they need to express their unhappiness with the current situation," said Carlos Canales, an

organizer at the Workplace Project, part of the May 1st Coalition.

"Additional forces are coming out with immigrant workers," said Sara Flounders, coordinator at Bail Out the People (BOTP) and also a secretariat member of Workers World Party. "It's not entirely an immigrant rights demonstration."

On April 3 and 4, BOTP organized protests on Wall Street, urging the government to bail out the people, not the banks. "That [day] was the anniversary of Dr. King's assassination and his demand for jobs for all working people," Flounders said.

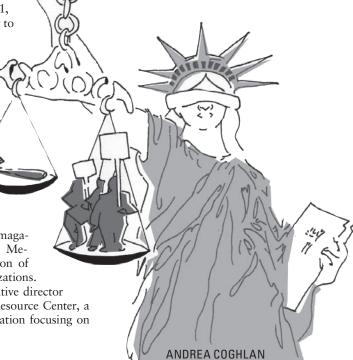
"He didn't make a distinction. And in that same spirit [we] take the next important anniversary, which is May 1, as a workers' day and use it to build solidarity.'

But while the economy may help build coalitions that cut across racial and class divides, challenges remain. "The predisposition of the U.S. populace to support a just immigration reform is not going to be very deep," said Roberto Lovato, a contributor to The Nation maga-

zine and New American Media, a national collaboration of 2,000 ethnic news organizations. Lovato is the former executive director of the Central American Resource Center, a Los Angeles-based organization focusing on social and economic empowerment for immigrant communities.

Still, activists are seeking to better unify various communities of color. Larry Hales, national organizer at Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) and Workers World newspaper contributing editor, is coordinating student walkouts trying to bridge divisions between the African-American and Latino community.

These are our brothers and sisters," Hales said, who is working primarily with students at City University of New York (CUNY), "and especially in this kind of environment, we fight for everyone's rights so there's no one left to exploit."



BY KAREN YI

# **Dreams** Day-By-Day

lusters of immigrant day laborers gather on the fringes of Green-Wood Cemetery in central Brooklyn, looking for work as early as 6 a.m. every day. They take any job they can get - construction, painting, gardening — but lately, they wait for hours only to come home empty-handed.

Raúl is a Mexican immigrant who lost his job three weeks ago and has worked only two days since. "There's nothing. There's no movement, there's no money here," he says.

With four kids back in Puebla, Mexico, Marcelo, who has been in the United States for five years, just wants to go back home. But between rent, remittances and food, "I can't make enough to go back," he says.

"It's not the same as before," says Vicente, an undocumented immigrant from Ecuador, who just went days without finding work. "But as bad as things

Many say they have stopped sending money back to their home countries; others are borrowing from friends or living off their meager savings, crowding into apart-



NO WORK: Standing along Roosevelt Avenue in Queens, day laborers wait for hours on end for any type of work to come their way. With unemployment reaching 8.5 percent in March, day laborers are luck to work once or twice a month. PHOTO: ALEX NATHANSON

ments with friends and family.

The New York Immigration Coalition estimates New York City area day laborers number 10,000, with more than 117,600 nationwide. With the economic downtown and unemployment reaching 8.5 percent in March, immigrant workers who used to

work full time are increasingly turning to day labor.

In Woodside, Queens, day laborers gather around Roosevelt Avenue between 65th and 73rd Streets. "There used to be about 100 of us," says Alan, an immigrant from Mexico, who was laid off five months ago. "Now there

are about 800."

"Day laborers are one of the most affected classes," says Ligia Guallpa, coordinator for the Latin American Workplace Project. "They work informally without any structure and there's no way workers can protect themselves from unemployment."

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in March, the unemployment rate for whites is 7.9 percent, while 13.3 percent of African-Americans and 11.4 percent of Latinos are unemployed.

"People of color have been hardest hit in every economic downturn this country has experienced," says Maya Wiley, founder and director of the Center for Social Inclusion. "Part of this is because people of color are the last to be hired and the first to be fired."

And historically, it has been people of color who have been politically marginalized.

"But have you seen anyone from Congress here to help us?" asks José, a day laborer from Cuenca, Ecuador, who has been in the United States for more than nine years. "Either way they blame us — the immigrant

are here," he says, "it's always worse back



**STANDING TOGETHER:** Members and supporters of the New York May 1st Coalition. PHOTO: THOMAS MARCZEWSKI

Activists are reaching out to non-immigrant workers to build a broad-based social movement capable of pressuring the economic elite. "Race and immigration are used as wedge issues to drive similarly disadvantaged communities apart and lower overall support for policy they might benefit from," said Maya Wiley, director of the Center for Social Inclusion.

The Obama administration announced if would begin talks on immigration reform in May. While the details have yet to be revealed, officials say the legislation would favor a process for the legalization of undocumented immigrants already living in the United States, while increasing enforcement of the border and cracking down on employers who hire undocumented workers.

This approach equals "trading off legalization for increased militarization, increased deportation and increased jailing," Lovato said. "If you limit the discussion of immigration within these borders, you've already lost. It's a false approach, when in fact there's global factors that are fundamental."

Analysists say comprehensive immigra-

tion reform must take into account the economic, social and political forces that cause migration. U.S. policies "drive businesses to set up their factories in China, in India, in Mexico and Vietnam, [which] is the same impulse that is driving workers from those countries to the West to seek higher wages," Gonzalez said. "The problem is that [the financial elites] want to lower barriers for capital while increasing barriers to labor."

"These periods of anti-immigrant hysteria and fervor are not uncommon in American history," Gonzalez said. "The main difference this time is the massive response and protests by the immigrants themselves."

With the global crisis disproportionately affecting workers and immigrant communities, this year's May Day will be an opportunity for change to come from below.

"The change will come when more and more workers — both immigrant workers and non-immigrant workers — realize the only potential is organization," said Flounders. "That's the only possibility, making organized demands."

— for coming here. They don't care about us, we are the illegals."

Tired of worksite exploitation, unemployment and heavy anti-immigrant sentiment, some day laborers are organizing around International Workers Day (May Day).

Roberto Meneses, founder and president of Jornaleros Unidos (United Day Laborers), says this economic crisis is an opportunity to unite, educate and find commonalities among all workers.

"Other workers look at us as the rivals," Meneses says, "but they don't realize we are victims of the same system. In our countries, we were also fired, because the crisis began a long time ago in our country."

Organizing workers with no stable jobs, set hours or common work sites provides a unique set of challenges; a majority of the day laborers *The Indypendent* spoke to at Green-Wood Cemetery were unaware of May Day or organizations such as Jornaleros Unidos.

And even for those involved in organizing, participation in May Day is not certain. Alan, a member of Jornaleros Unidos says he's not sure he'll attend the marches on May 1. "It's one day of work and sometimes you only work once a week," he says.

"The system has brainwashed us," Meneses says. "They teach us to think individualistically, not collectively." He adds, "We learn to think that way — but now look where we are. We are the first ones affected

and the ones with the least defense. It's important for us to organize."

The New York City May Day rally will begin at noon in Union Square, followed by a march to Federal Plaza at 5:30 p.m.

—KAREN YI

For more information or to participate in the May Day rally contact:
NEW YORK MAY 1ST COALITION
212-561-1744
May1@leftshift.org

For more information on day laborer rights' or to file a complaint, contact:
LA FUENTE

101 Avenue of the Americas, 17th Floor 212-388-3208 (Manhattan) 212-388-2119 (Queens) 212-388-2149 (Bronx/Wash. Heights)

JORNALEROS UNIDOS/ UNITED DAY LABORERS (Queens) 718-565-8862 jornalerosunidos@hotmail.com

CENTRO DE HOSPITALIDAD/ PROJECT HOSPITALITY (Staten Island) 718-448-1544 100 Park Ave.

EL PROYECTO DE LOS TRABAJADORES LATINOAMERICANOS/THE LATIN AMERICAN WORKERS PROJECT (Queens) 718-779-2553 79-09 Roosevelt Ave., 2nd Fl

# Injustice Behind Bars

A n undocumented immigrant from Cameroon, Pauline Nbzie landed among the inmates of the Hudson County Correctional Center in New Jersey late last year due to her "illegal status." Despite having no criminal record, Nbzie was detained for almost four months.

"They make you feel like you've killed so many people," said Nbzie, whose hands, feet and waist were shackled when she was taken into detention. "I've been here [in the United States] for 20 years and I never committed a crime, I always pay taxes. But I was treated like a criminal."

Stories like Nbzie's are not uncommon. On an average day, more than 30,000 immigrants are held by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which is approximately triple the number in custody 10 years ago. ICE projects that about 440,000 will be detained in 2009, up from 311,213 detained in 2008.

A single mother of three, Nbzie was torn from her children and held in detention from October 2008 to January 2009. She was denied medical care, verbally harassed by guards and placed in substandard conditions. Suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes, Nbzie waited for two weeks before receiving medication. Forced to share a room with 40 other women, Nbzie said the food and living conditions were inhumane. She was given a uniform, two pairs of underwear and two bras for four months. "It was wash one, wear one," Nbzie said. "It makes you feel less than a person."

The healthcare conditions in immigration detention facilities have come under fire Human Rights Watch and the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, both organizations released reports on the topic in March.

And, according to Amnesty International, asylum seekers, trafficking victims, children and even U.S. citizens are detained under conditions that violate their human rights. A March Amnesty report, *Jailed Without Justice*, takes issue with the lack of separation between immigration detainees and convicts, "unnecessary and excessive" use of restraints, and inadequate access to legal council, healthcare and physical exercise.

Being undocumented is a civil offense, yet detainees are subject to mandatory detention without the right to judicial review. "No one in removal proceedings has a right to paid counsel," said Kerri Talbot, associate director at the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), "They don't have the same rights people have for criminal proceedings." According to Amnesty, 84 percent of detainees are not able to attain legal aid.

"Immigrants are being persecuted under the full force of the Constitution of the laws, but they don't have legal access or any of the rights under the constitution," said Juan Carlos Ruiz, director of organizing at Youth Ministry for Peace and Justice.

"It's the criminalization of immigrants," said Alfonso Gonzales, a Latino Studies professor at New York University. The Migration Policy Institute found that 73 percent of detainees have no criminal records. "Naturally attributing and normalizing criminal characteristics to immigrants [is] the organizing principle behind all of this," Gonzales said.

The Clinton administration widened the range of deportable offenses in 1996 through the Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. Minor offenses became grounds to deport both illegal — and legal — immigrants.

"That's what allows more raids, border expansion [and] militarization," Gonzales said, "It's the assumption that the people that are [immigrating] are indeed national security threats."

After Sept. 11, 2001, immigrants were cast as a threat to national security, resulting in the USA PATRIOT Act, the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and increased funding for programs like 287(g), giving local law enforcement the power to act as immigration agents.

The case of permanent resident Tirso Jose highlights the relationship between ICE and local jails and the trend toward the privatization of detention centers. Detained for possession of marijuana, Jose was sent to Rikers to serve a three-day sentence. While detained, ICE officials questioned his immigration status, putting him through four additional days of "hell" at Rikers, then transferred him to Varick Immigration Detention Center in Chelsea.

Locked up in a room with 53 other men, Jose was only allowed to leave the room for meals — three times a day. Forced to wear orange jumpsuits, detainees had 6 a.m. wake-up calls and solitary confinement as punishment and endured freezing room temperatures. Jose suffered from a heart condition, yet spent a week without his medication, dropping 35 pounds during the four months he was held. "They treat you like an animal," he said, "it's a business, they don't care about you."

Detention Watch Network (DWN) reports that there are more than 350 detention facilities nationwide. "ICE only owns and operates seven of them, about 16 are run by private prison corporations, and the rest are county or local jails which ICE contracts for bed space," said Andrea Black, coordinator for DWN. Black says county and local jails hold 67 percent of all immigrants in detention.

With the decline in the number of incarcerated people, private prison corporations like Correction Corporation of America, GEO Group, Cornell and Management Corporations are turning to providing detention beds for ICE. The government gave ICE \$1.7 billion for detention and custody in 2009. And the average cost per detainee is \$95 per person per day. "When profit motives are involved in the process," said Black, "it's hard to look for alternatives."

"[Detention] temporarily keeps this population silent — out of sight, out if mind," said Chia-Chia Wang, coordinator at American Friends Service Committee, "but doesn't address the real problem."

"To have a truly humane system, we have to decriminalize immigrants by humanizing them and recognizing people's rights to move freely across borders," Gonzales said. "How can you have economic integration in the free movement of goods [with free trade agreements], but then criminalize the free movement of people? It's a total contradiction."

—KAREN YI

# **ECONOMIC DOWNTURN CRUNCHES**

## **CUNY Rising**

By Christopher Cascarano

ifty students gathered at Hunter College
March 25 to speak out against proposed
state funding cuts to the City University
of New York (CUNY). The rally was organized
by the Ad Hoc Committee Against Budget
Cuts and Tuition hikes, which includes CUNY
Contingents Unite, the International Socialist
Organization and the Internationalist Group.
The students were joined by striking workers
from the Stella D'oro Biscuit Co. in the Bronx
and members of the New York City Taxi Alliance

"Most students think they have to pay the tuition or they can't get the education. We're trying to bring students to the realization that we could stop the tuition hikes — and tuition all together," said Kristine Jungkurth, an 18-year-old Hunter College undeclared sophomore and member of the Ad Hoc Committee Against Budget Cuts and Tuition Hikes.

On March 5, hundreds of Hunter College students walked out of class and joined a rally organized by the Hunter College's Student Union to protest the proposed state funding cuts and impending tuition hikes. The students traveled downtown to join an estimated 40,000 person rally at New York City Hall, where a coalition of labor, education and activist organizations advocated for a tax increase on the wealthy to make up the budget deficit.

Earlier this year, several Hunter speak-outs were organized for students to share stories about their struggles to pay tuition. Students at Brooklyn College, LaGuardia College and City College have also held small demonstrations. Organizers at City College are planning an April 22 walkout to mark the 40th anniversary of the 1969 student takeover of the campus that forced CUNY administrators to adopt an open admissions policy that greatly expanded opportunities for people of color.

CUNY faculty, students and staff have also raised their voices at campus budget hearings being held on 10 CUNY campuses this semester. Initiated by the Professional Staff Congress, a progressive union that represents CUNY's 22,000 faculty and professional staff, these public forums have drawn crowds of as many as 300 people. The events allow various members of the CUNY community the chance to share their struggles against tuition hikes and budget cuts with each other and a slew of local politicians and their aides who have attended these gatherings.

Speaking at an April 2 campus budget hearing at Bronx Community College, Assemblyperson Michael Benjamin (D-Morrisania) told participants that their activism had helped prod the State legislature into approving \$4 billion in new taxes on New York's wealthiest residents in order to ameliorate budget cuts planned for public higher education and other crucial social programs.

"We heard you loud and clear and we believe we did the right thing," Benjamin said.
"[We] understand that if we are going to get out of this mess, we have to invest in public higher education."

Campus budget hearings will be held at Hostos Community College and John Jay College April 30 and at Laguardia Community College May 7. For more information, see psc-cuny.org.

John Tarleton contributed to this article.

By Chris Cascarano

okou Ado, a 26-year-old undergraduate chemistry student at City College of New York lost his job when the retail store he worked in as a security guard closed. "Finding a job was difficult because I go to school and study all day," he said. Eventually, Ado found another security guard job, but the stress of being out of work and in school hurt his grades, he said.

As local art galleries lose patrons and eliminate pay for interns, Heather Saenz, a 20-year-old art history undergraduate at Columbia University, cannot afford an unpaid internship to gain the experience she needs to get a job in her field, which is rare books.

Suman Saha Ray, a 27-year-old biochemistry undergraduate at City College said the antiquated equipment in the school's labs is not being replaced, and that there is less demand for research. "We have to wait around all day to get things done because we have to share equipment," he said. "This economy is really affecting everything."

College is commonly believed to be the best place to be during a harsh job market and economic slump; however, as students' budgets become tighter and tuition continues to rise, the struggle students are experiencing to pay for school is challenging that conventional wisdom. According to students, administrators and teachers in New York City, the U.S. economic recession has made college life just as difficult, if not more, than life in the "real world."

This economic downturn, marking its 17th month in April, has made paying for already high tuition and costs of living much harder for both middle- and low-income students.

Since 1984 college tuition has increased by 439 percent — faster than medicare, food and housing, according to the research group, The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's 2008 report, Measuring Up. For lower-income families, the cost of college is now, on average, 55 percent of their income, and 25 and 9 percent for middle- and high-income families.

Before the economy fell, paying recordhigh tuition may have been a struggle, but it was possible for most students. This economic climate, however, is straining families and students as they continue to make ends meet semester to semester. Unemployment reached a 25-year high in March when it hit 8.5 percent, leaving an estimated 13 million people jobless. As jobs are lost, paying for education is increasingly difficult.

"I've seen students and parents lose jobs," said Jennifer Gabourey, a graduate

student at Hunter College who also teaches night classes at Hunter College. Gabourey is a member of City University of New York (CUNY) Contingents Unite, a group of teachers and administrators for the CUNY college network that is speaking out against proposed tuition hikes and state budget cuts. "I've seen a lot of kids drop classes, and I sign a lot of withdrawal slips too,"

CUNY students, for example, are feeling crunched by the recession. The state's proposed 2009-10 budget will cut CUNY funding by \$65 million. CUNY administration is proposing a tuition hike of \$300 per semester for senior colleges and \$200 for junior colleges. This follows a 2008-2009 budget that decreased state funding by \$215 million and increased tuition by \$320 per term.

The budget cuts and tuition hikes at CUNY, where students rely heavily on its low tuition and commonly work to pay for school themselves, mean many are going to have to work harder than ever to make ends meet. "This is a regressive tax against the students," Gabourey said. "I'm startled at how profoundly unjust this is."

In reaction, CUNY students are continuing to organize. More than 50 students rallied March 25 against the tuition hikes and budget cuts at Hunter College, at 68th Street and Lexington Avenue, chanting and holding posters.

More than 60 New School students occupied a portion of a vacant building, 65 East University Street, April 10 to demand greater transparency and accountability from the administration and increased student involvement in the school's budget. Nineteen students were arrested in what was considered an aggressive NYPD operation. Earlier this year, dozens of New York University students occupied a school cafeteria to protest, in part, their high tuition.

As more family members lose their jobs, students often are expected to pitch in to help cover tuition expenses. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 37.3 percent of full-time students, and 72.7 percent of part-time students, held jobs in 2007. Data for 2008 has not yet been released; however, according to New York City administrators and students jobs are in high demand and hard to come by.

Many of the jobs that provide the flexibility that students need are the same ones the recession has claimed. The service industry has seen far less customers, and in days of slow business, part-time positions are in low demand by employers. Some students even reported having trouble finding babysitting jobs as families try to cut expenses.

Joseph Knox, manager of recruitment and labor relations for Columbia University Libraries, said there has been a sharp increase in the number of students looking for campus jobs. Due to the fixed number of jobs created in the previous year's budget, the school cannot accommodate hundreds of students who want, and need, work.

Gabourey also reported witnessing many students drop classes in order to take on more hours at their job.

One Columbia University student was laid-off from her tutoring job and had to find work off campus, which is illegal for foreign students. For this student, who preferred not to be identified fearing that her student visa could be revoked, finding a job was a necessity. Due to a drop in the Korean



**BUDGET BLUES:** Students at Hunter College rallied on campus March 25 against Gov. David Paterson's 2009-2010 budget, which significantly cuts funding to the City University of New York. As a result, school officials are proposing tuition hikes. PHOTO: CHRIS CASCARANO

# **COLLEGE STUDENTS**

# As state budget deficit force tuition increases, local students take a stand

exchange rate, paying her tuition and living expenses has become more difficult for her family in Korea.

"All the campus jobs were filled so I had to find work somewhere," she said.

Other students, like Melissa Ramnerine, an 18-year-old hospitality student at the New York School of Technology, cannot find work either. "My mom works in the hospitality industry too, and they are cutting her hours and laying people off," she said. "I want to get experience for my major and I've looked for work, but I cannot find any jobs, and I need one because I got denied financial aid."

Layoffs, resulting in a decrease in total family income, has caused students who already work to take on more hours, forcing them to cut back on classes and study time. A recent study by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group noted that 42 percent of students working 25 hours or more a week reported that their job hurt their grades. Fifty-three percent of the students reported that working limited their class schedule and 63 percent said they could not afford school without working.

"I have to find a new major because I don't have the time to do the drawing for my architecture classes," said Paul Gowistowski, a 21-year-old undergraduate student at the New York City School of Technology. Gowistowki moonlights full-time as a construction worker in United Association Local 1, and said he has seen an estimated 80 percent of the employees at his company get laid off in recent months.

"I go to work at 3:30 p.m. and work until midnight," Gowistowski said. "I'll have to try engineering, but I don't know if I'll have time for that either."

Charles Jones, a 30-year-old education undergraduate student at Long Island University, said he can barely balance both school and work. Jones works full-time as a teacher's assistant at a public school on top of a 16-credit-hour course load. "I'm not even sure how I manage to do both, but it's a stress," he said.

Some young people are asking themselves, "why college?" and others, "why work?" Evidence shows that the recession



FUTURE UNKNOWN: Charles Jones, a 30-year-old education student at Long Island University, is only a few semesters from graduating and fears that he will not be able to find a job. Already working as a teacher's assistant, Jones has seen a number of lay-offs and budget cuts in the New York City Public schools where he plans to work. PHOTO: CHRIS CASCARANO

has also created a push-and-pull affect amongst young people deciding what to do after high school. Those who can easily afford higher education are continuing with school to avoid desiccated job markets; those who cannot attend, in greater numbers due to the economy, are looking at other options. It seems too risky to pay thousands of dollars in tuition, and possibly land in debt, in a shaky job market.

"I'm worried because I'm getting an English degree that is worth nothing in the real world," said the unnamed Columbia student who had to find work off campus. "One professor is telling us all to go to graduate school because academia will be the safest place for us to find jobs."

For others, college has created a shelter during the recession. "Things really aren't that bad for me because I'm going to medical school when I graduate," said Dan Ping, a New York University music and chemistry undergraduate.

Many schools are scaling back needblind admissions, giving those who can afford school better chances of acceptance over those who would need financial aid. At the other end of the spectrum, there are an increasing number of young people interested in opportunities outside of higher education. In the latest propensity study by the U.S. Department of Defense, the military has seen the first rise of interest in joining among 18- to 24-year-olds since 2001, according to Eileen Lainez, a spokesperson for the DOD. Since the military has a fixed number of recruits each year, and the number does not change, the propensity study is the only indicator that more young people are looking at other options than school.

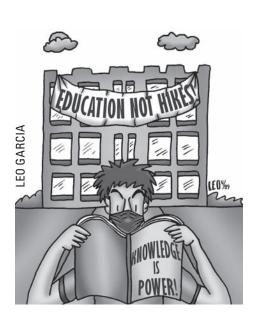
Other institutions are observing similar trends, including AmeriCorps, a federal organization that helps young people pay tuition in exchange for U.S.-based volunteer work. In 2008, AmeriCorps had 3,151 applicants, and in 2009, 9,731, according to Sandy Scott, a spokesperson for AmeriCorps. "We have seen a significant spike [in applications] due to the economy," Scott said. "I think it is driving young people towards volunteering."

Unanimously, the recession has caused anxiety amongst students soon to make their entry into working world. Many of the jobs lost are those that college graduates would likely be applying for. According to the State's report, 32,000 professional and business were lost since February 2008, and financial activities lost 28,900 jobs.

"I'm starting to wonder what it's all worth if there isn't a job at the end of my education," said Lisa Anchin, a comparative literature Ph.D. student at Columbia University. "It is reassuring to be in school,

but I still have to find a job when I get out. I don't think French departments [which she plans to teach in] are doing so well."

New York University student Ping was one of the few students who remained optimistic about the U.S. economy and his future. "It will be okay eventually," he said. "What goes down must come up."



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THE INDYPENDENT APRIL 17 – MAY 14, 2009 7

# Robot Wars

By Eric Stoner

ith little public scrutiny, robotics is quickly revolutionizing not only how war is fought, but who fights in war. While the U.S. military first began to experiment with remote-controlled weapons during World War I, the Pentagon had no robots on the ground when it invaded Iraq in 2003, and only a handful of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the air. Today, according to P.W. Singer, author of Wired for War and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, the U.S. military has some 7,000 UAVs in operation — more than double the number of manned aircraft in its arsenal — and more than 12,000 robots on the ground in Iraq alone.

Predator drones armed with laser-guided Hellfire missiles have regularly bombed Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years, and their use is skyrocketing. In 2008, 71 Predators flew 138,404 combat hours — a 94 percent increase over the year before, according to a recent presentation by U.S. Air Force Col. Eric Mathewson. And over the last year, drones flown largely by the CIA have launched missile attacks inside Pakistan more than 40 times. Rather than reconsider this deadly policy, President Obama has become an enthusiastic backer. Since his inauguration, he has authorized 11 such attacks that have collectively killed over 145 people, many of them civilians, and sparked large protests within Pakistan.

UAVs are also increasingly being used inside the United States. The Department of Homeland Security has deployed unarmed drones to monitor the borders with Mexico and Canada. Police departments in Los Angeles, Houston and Miami have been testing drones for surveillance purposes in their cities. And according to the Washington Post, activists have even reported seeing insect-sized spy drones at antiwar rallies in Washington and New York.

In Iraq, there are at least 22 different unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs) in operation. While they are used primarily for reconnaissance and to help soldiers defuse roadside bombs, the first armed ground robot was deployed south of Baghdad in May 2007. The Special Weapons Observation Remote Direct-Action System, or SWORDS, stands three feet tall and rolls on two tank treads. It's currently fitted with an M249 machine gun that can be swapped for other powerful weapons and controlled with a modified laptop. More sophisticated UGVs — such as the MAARS and the one-ton Gladiator — are currently being developed and tested and will likely see combat in the near future.

Congress has helped spur this revolution. In 2001, the Defense Authorization Act stated that one-third of the military's deep strike aircraft should be unmanned within 10 years, and that one-third of the ground combat vehicles should be unmanned within 15 years. And in the Defense Department's 2007 budget, Congress ordered the Pentagon to show "a preference for joint unmanned systems in acquisition programs for new systems."

Congressional backing and the increasing popularity of these systems within the military have fueled a booming robotics industry. The Association of Unmanned Vehicle Systems International, for example, has 1,400 member companies and organizations from 50 countries looking to cash in on the future of war.



#### WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

While robots spell big money for weapons contractors, they will make the work of antiwar activists far more difficult. In all likelihood, as the proponents of military robots claim, the number of U.S. soldiers who are killed on the battlefield will decrease. This has been the trend with continual advances in military and medical technology and as the Pentagon has turned to mercenaries and civilian contractors who are not included in official death tolls.

For example, more than 58,000 U.S. soldiers were killed in Vietnam. Today, after six years of fighting in Iraq, fewer than 4,300 U.S. soldiers have died in combat. And in Afghanistan, about 1,100 soldiers from Western countries have been killed. The use of robots is partly responsible for this dramatic reduction in U.S. casualties. As unmanned systems are deployed in greater numbers, that figure will drop.

This may sound like a positive development, but its potential downsides are profound. At the same time that the number of soldiers killed in war has dropped, the percentage of civilian casualties has steadily risen. In World War I, less than 10 percent of casualties were non-combatants; in World War II, the percentage of civilian casualties was roughly 50 percent, and today over 90 percent of those killed in wars are civilians. In Iraq, one detailed study estimated that more than 600,000 Iraqis had been violently killed by June 2006. By allowing soldiers to kill from greater distances, which makes it easier to pull the trigger, robots may take this trend a step further.

There is already evidence that the use of aerial drones is disastrous for civilian populations. The *Sunday Times* of London recently reported that as many as one million Pakistanis have fled their homes "to escape attacks by the unmanned spy planes as well as bombings by the Pakistani army."

Some argue that military robotics will also increase the threat of terrorism. "If people know that they are going to be killed by these robots," argues Fr. G. Simon Harak, director of the Marquette University Center for Peacemaking, "then why would they not therefore retaliate against civilian centers in

the United States? It only makes military sense that they'll find where we are vulnerable."

More than anything else, the prospect of U.S. troops dying on some far-off battlefield limits public support for military force. Therefore, if the number of soldiers coming home in body bags can be significantly reduced, then the public will probably pay even less attention to foreign policy and future wars. This will in turn make it easier for politicians to start wars.

For instance, John Pike, the director of GlobalSecurity.org, recently wrote in the *Washington Post* that robots would allow the United States to intervene militarily in Darfur or other hot spots where politicians are currently reluctant to send flesh-and-blood soldiers.

Robots will also affect the counter-recruitment movement. Whereas each SWORDS is controlled by at least one soldier, progress in the field of artificial intelligence may allow a soldier to control multiple robots simultaneously. James Canton, chief executive officer of the Institute of Global Futures and an expert on military technology, predicts that future military units may consist of 150 humans and 2,000 robots. Such a development would allow the government to go to war with far fewer humans.

#### **GROWING RESISTANCE**

While a robotized military presents new challenges for antiwar activists, it also creates new organizing opportunities. Many weapons builders that develop unmanned systems, such as iRobot and Northrop Grumman, are publicly traded companies. That exposes them to potential shareholder resolutions and makes them more sensitive about their public image.

Some military contractors also make consumer products. For example, iRobot manufactures both the PackBot, a bomb-disposal robot that can be armed with a shotgun, and the popular Roomba vacuum cleaner. As the market for personal and service robots — which was valued at \$3 billion in 2008 — continues to grow, boycotting corporations that make both consumer and military robots is potentially an effective tactic for activists.

With nearly 350 colleges and universities reportedly conducting research for the Pentagon, another possible target is robotics research funded by the Department of Defense. On March 2, 2007, activists with the Pittsburgh Organizing Group blockaded the National Robotics Engineering Center at Carnegie Mellon University, one of the largest academic military contractors in the country. Fourteen activists were arrested in the action, which successfully shut down the robotics lab for the day and garnered considerable media attention.

Finally, activists are beginning to protest at military bases where the drone pilots work. At Nevada's Creech Air Force Base — one of the locations where controllers use Predator and Reaper drones to bomb Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan — protesters who participated in the Nevada Desert Experience's annual Sacred Peace Walk kept a presence outside of the base for 10 days, and 14 were arrested in an act of civil disobedience on April 9.

When it comes to killer robots, the stakes are high. If activists don't work to stop this robotics revolution in its tracks, science fiction has warned us about our potential fate.

A longer version of this article is published in the April 2009 issue of WIN Magazine.

#### LIFE UNCERTAIN FOR U.S. WAR RESISTERS

ne the north side of an imaginary line that separates Canada from the United States, a safe haven for U.S. soldiers resisting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan remains in jeopardy

On March 30, for the second time in 10 months, Canada's House of Commons passed a motion directing Prime Minister Stephen Harper to stop deporting U.S. soldiers seeking amnesty. On March 25, former U.S. Army Specialist Kimberly Rivera, a mother of three, was granted an emergency stay of removal. The first female soldier to seek refuge in Canada, Rivera was sched-

uled for deportation March 26 to face a U.S. Army court martial. At least four U.S. soldiers have been deported since last July.

"This was the fifth time that the court ruled that Iraq War resisters face harsher punishment if they're sent back to the U.S.," said Michelle Robidoux, spokesperson for the Toronto-based support campaign. "These conscientious objectors should not be sent back to the United States to face jail time for opposing the Iraq War."

To read the full story by Mike Ferner, visit indypendent.org.

APRIL 17 – MAY 14, 2009 THE INDYPENDENT

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#### By Thom Hartmann

Editor's Note: With all the talk about tea parties and tax revolts, The Indypendent felt it was time for a historical perspective.

he real Boston Tea Party was a protest against huge corporate tax cuts for the British East India Company, the largest transnational corporation then in existence. This corporate tax cut threatened to decimate small Colonial businesses by helping the British East India Company pull a Wal-Mart against small entrepreneurial tea shops, and individuals began a revolt that kicked-off a series of events that ended in the creation of The United States of America.

On a cold November day in 1773, activists gathered in a coastal town. The corporation had gone too far and the two thousand people who'd jammed into the meeting hall were torn as to what to do about it. Unemployment was exploding and the economic crisis was deepening; corporate crime, governmental corruption spawned by corporate cash and an ethos of greed were blamed. "Why do we wait?" demanded one at the meeting, a fisherman named George Hewes. "The more we delay, the more strength is acquired" by the company and its puppets in the government. "Now is the time to prove our courage," he said. Soon, the moment came when the crowd decided for direct action and rushed into the streets.

Although schoolchildren are usually taught



that the American Revolution was a rebellion against "taxation without representation," akin to modern-day conservative taxpayer revolts, in fact what led to the revolution was rage against a transnational corporation that, by the 1760s, dominated trade from China to India to the Caribbean, and controlled nearly all commerce to and from North America, with subsidies and special dispensation from the British crown.

As noted in "Retrospect of the Boston Tea Party with a Memoir of George R.T. Hewes, a Survivor of the Little Band of Patriots Who Drowned the Tea in Boston Harbor in 1773," Hewes notes, "The [East India] Company received permission to transport tea, free of all duty, from Great Britain to America..." allowing it to wipe out New England-based tea wholesalers

and mom-and-pop stores and take over the tea business in all of America.

The citizens of the colonies were preparing to throw off one of the corporations that for more than a century had determined nearly every aspect of their lives through its economic and political power. They were planning to destroy the goods of the world's largest multinational corporation, intimidate its employees, and face down the guns of the government that supported it.

That night, Hewes dressed as an Indian, blackening his face with coal dust, and joined crowds of other men in hacking apart the chests of tea and throwing them into the harbor. In all, the 342 chests of tea — over 90,000 pounds — thrown overboard that night were enough to make 24 million cups of tea and were valued by the East India Company at 9,659 Pounds Sterling or, in today's currency, just over

In response, the British Parliament immediately passed the Boston Port Act stating that the port of Boston would be closed until the citizens of Boston reimbursed the East India Company for the tea they had destroyed. The colonists refused. A year and a half later, the colonists would again state their defiance of the East India Company and Great Britain by taking on British troops in an armed conflict at Lexington and Concord (the "shots heard 'round the world") on April 19, 1775.

That war—finally triggered by a transnational corporation and its government patrons trying to deny American colonists a fair and competitive local marketplace - would end with independence for the colonies.

The revolutionaries had put the East India Company in its place with the Boston Tea Party, and that, they thought, was the end of that. Unfortunately, within 100 years, during the so-called Gilded Age, powerful rail, steel and oil interests would rise up to begin a new form of oligarchy, capturing the newly formed Republican Party in the 1880s, and have been working to establish a permanent wealthy and ruling class in this country ever since.

This is excerpted from, "The Real Boston Tea Party was an Anti-Corporate Revolt," published April 15 on commondreams.org.



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# **Inside Gaza: The Land of Ghosts**



**LOST CHILDHOOD:** A child from the Najjar family in Khoza'a stands in the remains of his home in March, which was destroyed by white phosphorous and bulldozers in an Israeli attack. PHOTO:JACQUIE SOOHEN

By Anjali Kamat

GAZA STRIP—In March I entered Gaza via Rafah with an international delegation led by the U.S. women's peace group CODEPINK. Three months after the invasion the memories from Israel's war on Gaza are still fresh. In just over four days, I heard a litany of horrors.

One family of 10 in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza, hid under the staircase of their destroyed home for 12 days with no food and little water while U.S.-made F-16 fighter planes and Apache helicopters dropped bombs all around them. "Each day felt like an entire year," 42-year-old Jihad said. His mother, Mahdiya, can vividly recall how, as a terrified young bride in 1948, she was driven by Jewish militias from her birthplace of Simsim — now a nature reserve in Israel. She's lived through decades of Israeli occupation in Jabaliya refugee camp, the largest and most crowded camp in Gaza, and the birthplace of the first intifada in 1987. But she said she had never experienced such savagery as this recent assault. "Every day we died anew," Mahdiya said. "But at least we only lost our home and not our children."

For others, such as Dr. Ezzeldin Abu al-Aish, a well-known doctor and peace advocate who lives in the same neighborhood, Israel's war resulted in a wrenching loss. A day and a half before the official end of the war, Israeli tanks fired deliberately on his home, killing three of his daughters and his niece in an instant.

On the same day, Mohammad Shurrab from Khan Yunis refugee camp was driving home from his orchards when Israeli soldiers fired at his car. As his sons stepped out of the car, the soldiers shot 28-year-old Kassab in the chest and 18-year-old Ibrahim below his knee. Kassab died instantly and Israeli soldiers warned the injured father that if he made a single phone call he would risk losing his second son as well. Over the next 12 hours, Shurrab could only watch as his second son bled to death. "When the ambulances were finally permitted to come at midnight," he said, "it took one minute to reach the hospital. I went to the emergency room and my two young men went to the morgue."

In the farming village of Khoza'a, several members of the Najjar family crowded into a single room late on Jan. 12 as bulldozers demolished their homes, farms and livestock, and white phosphorous rained down from above. The next morning a group of 20 women came outside waving white flags. Rouheya, a mother of three, was shot in the head by an Israeli sniper and left to die on

the street. She bled for over 12 hours before her family or medics were allowed to approach her body.

"Resistance? What resistance?" Iman Najjar, Rouheya's neighbor asked as she recounted the killing. "We were all sitting in our homes shaking with fear. They knew there was no one to fight. We were just animals in a pen to them."

The Sammouni family in Zaitoun, just east of Gaza City, lost 29 members in early January. On Jan. 5, tank shells struck a home sheltering dozens. After four days, rescue workers found a few deeply traumatized and wounded survivors trapped in a pile of rubble and corpses. Staring out at the ruins of his home and small farm, Abu Adnan is haunted by what happened: "I came face to face with death. How can I ever forget seeing the bloodied and dismembered bodies of my own family?" His cousin Hamed As-Sammouni added, "This used to be lush farmland. Now it's a land of ghosts."

Amira Hass, who has reported for Israel's *Haaretz* newspaper from Gaza and the West Bank for almost two decades, was struck by the intensity of this latest war. "The Israeli army attacked Gaza as if they were fighting the American army. It's nonsense to say the IDF did not intend to kill civilians. They know Gaza very well and they know there are civilians everywhere."

For many families in Gaza, particularly those who live in the south near Egypt, the war did not end with the ceasefire announcement on Jan. 18. In early February, Apache helicopters hovering over Rafah destroyed Abu Jameel's home, farmland and a car he had just purchased in the hopes of supplementing his dwindling income as a driver. This is the second time Abu Jameel has been made homeless. He used to live along the border and several International Solidarity Movement activists including Rachel Corrie had tried to protect his home from being demolished. Caterpillar bulldozers destroyed his home in 2004, a year after Corrie was killed.

As these devastating stories testify, Israel's war on Gaza did not just last 22 days. And long before this war, Israel's crushing blockade of the Gaza Strip — supported by the United States and the European Union — had reduced life to mere survival for a majority of the population. The Israeli policy of closures, begun in the early 1990s, developed into a blockade after Hamas won the elections in January 2006, and then into a full-scale siege in June 2007.

More than a year ago, MIT economist Sara Roy described the situation in stark terms: "Gaza is no longer approaching economic collapse. It has collapsed."

It seemed unimaginable that things could get worse. But they did.

Some 1.5 million people are trapped on less than 140 square miles of land. Unemployment is at 70 percent, 80 percent live below the poverty line, and 90 percent of Palestinians are

dependent on the trickle of international food aid that Israel allows in. The rest are forced to live off expensive goods smuggled in through illegal tunnels that are the target of almost daily bomb attacks.

Gaza is buried under 600,000 tons of rubble but reconstruction remains a distant dream. Since last November, Israel has allowed just a single truck of construction materials into Gaza. The \$5.2 billion pledged at the international conference to rebuild Gaza will remain an empty gesture unless there is real pressure to end the siege and open the borders.

Despite their enormous loss, the people of Gaza remain resilient. Everyone I met was insistent on staying on their land, even if their homes are destroyed. But they want justice and an end to Israel's impunity. Abu Omar, who owned a tile factory in the now flattened neighborhood of Ezbat Abed Rabbo, said he wants to go to court and fight for reparations from Israel. "Why do we need to rely on the sympathy of the world? We want the world to stand by our rights. We don't want their charity, little bits of money and food. We are just asking for our rights, nothing else."

Anjali Kamat is a producer at Democracy Now!



**WITHOUT A HOME**: (Above) A mother and daughter stand in rubble in March, surveying the destruction of their neighborhood, Ezbat Abed Rabbo, near Jabaliya. PHOTO: JACQUIE



**STAYING GROUNDED:** Abu Adnan, from the Sammouni family in Zaitoun, sits with his daughter in March at the trailer located where their house once stood. PHOTO: JACQUIE SOOHEN

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## Israel's Killer Election

By Jaisal Noor and Arun Gupta

Just before being sworn in as head of Israel's new far-right coalition government March 31, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened to attack Iran. Weeks earlier, incoming Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beiteinu party, said the new government's "first priority is to eliminate Hamas."

With bluster like this, it may seem there has been a sea change in Israeli politics. Lieberman is seen as an extremist because he is demanding that Arab citizens take loyalty oaths or be expelled from Israel. In addition, the new Israeli leadership has rejected the "road map to peace" outlined at the 2007 Annapolis Conference and is committed to expanding illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. These will supposedly be sticking points during Netanyahu's scheduled visit to Washington in May to meet with President Barack Obama.

The election does mark the defeat of the previous Kadima-led government, which favored the U.N.-sponsored peace process. Often described as "centrist," Kadima split off from Netanyahu's Likud Party in 2005. If anything, this election is about the consolidation of Revisionist Zionism, which rejects any compromise with the Palestinians. Labor, heir to leftist Labor Zionists that dominated Israel's politics for nearly 30 years, has been reduced to just 13 seats in the 120-seat Knesset and has joined the coalition government.

Yet breaking down Israeli parties into center, left and right is misguided, says George Galloway, British parliamentarian and noted opponent of the Israeli occupation. He told *The Indypendent* that "every time Israel moves right, we are invited to consider the previous right the center, and this march has led all the way to Lieberman."

Indeed, while Kadima and Labor orchestrated the Israeli assault that killed more than 1,400 Palestinians, the right gained popularity in the run-up to the election

#### **WALLED IN**

Before Tristan Anderson was critically injured March 13 by a high-velocity tear-gas canister fired by Israeli forces March 13, few Americans had ever heard of the village of Ni'lin.

A San Francisco Bay Area resident, Anderson, 38, had volunteered with the Internal Solidarity Movement to monitor conditions in the agricultural village. Located two miles from the internationally recognized boundaries marking the West Bank, Ni'lin has been gradually carved up by Israel. More than 80 percent of the land has been seized for illegal settlements and Jewish-only roads.

Now, Israel is grabbing a quarter of what remains of Ni'lin, so it can construct a massive wall that cuts deeply into the West Bank and expropriats land from Palestinians.

The people of Ni'lin have been staging protests since May 2008 against the confiscation of their land. Anderson was shot during the villagers' regular Friday protest, as they attempted to march from their fields to the wall.

To read the full story written by Soozy Duncan, visit indypendent.org.

by arguing that the assault did not go far enough or meet its objectives.

Galloway says Israelis "had the option of re-electing the brutal killers of Gaza," he said, "but they chose even more brutal, even more desperate killers in Netanyahu and Lieberman."

Has anything actually changed then? Israel has long been committed to aggression: In the past seven years alone, it has launched three devastating wars against the West Bank, Lebanon and Gaza and reportedly bombed Syria and Sudan.

Netanyahu may warn darkly of Iran's alleged desire for nuclear weapons, trying to justify yet another war, but other prominent Israeli politicians, such as Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak, have made similar predictions in the past (while never acknowledging Israel's extensive nuclear arsenal).

Settlement building may increase. The Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported that Netanyahu reached a "secret agreement" with Lieberman for constructing settlements to cut the West Bank in half and encircle East Jerusalem with Jewish-only settlements. But the West Bank has long been cantonized, East Jerusalem has been slowly encircled and ethnically cleansed for decades, and settlements have been constructed feverishly under almost every Israeli government.

The previous Israeli administration "might have spoken fervently about peace with the Palestinians," the *Jerusalem Post* reports, "but in 2008, Palestinians watched workers break slightly more ground for new settlement homes than they did in any single year under the previous" government.

Kadima supports rebranding Palestinian bantustans as a state. Netanyahu opposes even this, and Liberman declared that Israel was not bound by the 2007 Annapolis conference. Ironically, the Bush administration cited Hamas' refusal to accept these terms of surrender as one reason it wanted to topple the Palestinians' democratically elected government.

Even Lieberman, who revels in declarations of cruelty, having proposed that Arab Knesset members who meet with Hamas be executed and that thousands of Palestinian prisoners be drowned in the Dead Sea, is no outlier.

Founding Prime Minister David Ben Gurion talked extensively of transfers and expulsions years before Israel was established. Israel has passed numerous laws designed to suppress the birth rate of its Arab citizens. In 2003, while serving as finance minister, Netanyahu spoke of the "demographic threat" posed by Israeli Arabs. And just last December, Foreign Minister and Kadima party head Tzipi Livni said of Israeli Arabs, "there is no question of carrying out a transfer or forcing them to leave."

If anything, the bluster may be cover for weakness. Few expect Netanyahu's fractious government to survive long, increasing the possibility that bombing Iran would boost his popularity. One discouraging sign is that Israel recently received what Amnesty International called a "massive" new U.S. weapons shipment.

Perhaps Obama may warn Netanyahu against a rogue strike against Iran when the two leaders do meet, but the White House will not hinder Israel's continued colonization of Palestinian lands, despite any lofty pronouncements that may come from such a meeting.

Little seems to have changed, other than perhaps removing the latest fig leaf from the occupation.



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# A Face of Cambodian Courage

By Katrin Redfern

In Cambodia, the weight of many struggles for justice is carried by a courageous woman. In a nation that suffers from police and government corruption, gender inequality, influence from foreign nations and corporations, and battles for control of resources — land, timber, fisheries and oil — it is remarkable that Sochua Mu has accomplished so much.

"Cambodia is a democracy on paper, but in reality, is a dictatorship," said Sochua in an interview with The Indypendent in March. "Life is still cheap in Cambodia. Human trafficking, drug trafficking, land grabbing and forced evictions are all carried out under the nose of the government."

A life-long social justice activist for women, the poor and refugees, Sochua, 55, was the first female Minister of Veterans and Women's Affairs, a position she served from 1998 to 2004. Frustrated by corruption in the Hun Sen ruling party, she resigned to join the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) with dreams to rebuild Cambodia from the bottom up. She was elected to the Cambodian National Assembly in 2008.

Hoping to change the course of U.S. aid and influence in Cambodia, Sochua met with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on March 19 in Washington, D.C., at the annual Vital Voices Global Partnership awards, an international non-profit that supports women leaders.

Sochua hopes to lobby the Obama admin-

istration to take a firmer stance on supporting democracy and human rights, as well as redirect U.S. aid that she says the Bush administration focused on military and security. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States provided Cambodia \$54 million in 2008 and \$700 million total since USAID opened an office in the country in 1992.

"The international donor community is reluctant to criticize the government for its poor performance on human rights, prefer-



ring to practice closed-door diplomacy," Sochua said. "This practice has yielded next to no reforms and donors continue to be satisfied with token actions taken by the government to give a façade to democracy and social justice."

Sochua traveled to New York City to participate in the March 26 documentary theatrical performance of "Seven," which presents her and six other courageous female leaders' lives, from Russia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Guatemala, in struggles for justice and freedom.

At 18, Sochua was forced to flee to Paris in 1972 as the Vietnam War spilled into Cambodia and the country fell under the command of the communist Khmer Rouge party in 1975. Her parents vanished during the genocide that claimed the lives of roughly one-quarter of Cambodia's population. She attended the University of California, Berkeley, and worked with Cambodian refugees that immigrated to the United States. She returned to southeast Asia in 1981 to work in the United Nations refugee camps established on the Thailand-Cambodia border. Sochua remained in exile for 18 years until 1989 when she was able to re-enter Cambodia.

"What I saw when I returned home was a country in ruins," Sochua said. "But I was no longer a child. I came back to help rebuild a nation."

In 1991, Sochua founded Khemara, the first organization to focus on improving the lives of women. In 2002, she mobilized

25,000 women candidates to run for local commune elections, which were reinstated after 30 years. More than 900 women were elected. She was nominated for a Nobel Prize in 2005 for her work against female sex trafficking in Cambodia and Thailand.

Today, the majority of Cambodians depend on small-scale agriculture, lumbering and fishing. However, due to the country's turbulent recent history, land ownership is generally undocumented and often contested. As a result, it is easy for the powerful to acquire land and hand it over to investors for commercial and tourism development. Sochua continues to visit these communities who are battling to stay on their land and fight for their livelihoods.

"It is now common practice for powerful corporations and government officials to utilize armed forces to push citizens off their rightfully and legally held land," Sochua explained during meetings with officials from the U.S. State Department and members of Congress in March. These evictions are often violent, with soldiers wielding guns, tear gas and tasers and burning houses to the ground, while citizens are beaten, maimed and arrested."

When asked if she was hopeful about the situation in Cambodia, Sochua's response was clear: "No, not until there is a change of regime," she said. "That can only happen when we have a real election that is free and fair. The West should insist on that, otherwise all the aid they have poured into Cambodia will not work."









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# Reporting Dangerously From Zimbabwe

By Alaina Varvaloucas AND JERRY GUO

HARARE, Zimbabwe—"Quick, snap the picture, now," urges Paul Magwenya\*, a local journalist, as we lean out the window of our car to take a shot. We are at a morgue in the capital city of Harare, which has been in the news since last fall due to a cholera outbreak and an employee protest. The Zimbabwean police force has made it clear the hospital grounds are strictly a nogo zone, especially for reporters. Worried, we speed out of the parking lot, passing a police car as we go.

As we catch a glimpse of the officer, our driver chuckles and exclaims, "I've got a journalist in the front seat and two Americans taking pictures in the back. I'm really asking for it.'

We nervously laugh at our introduction to the clandestine world of Zimbabwean journalism, but Magwenya does not find the comment amusing. As a journalist trying to work under President Robert Mugabe's repressive government, he lives in constant anxiety. For years Mugabe has systematically shut down newspapers opposed to his policies and had cheeky journalists beaten and tossed in prison. Last year several were arrested, detained or beaten, and one photographer was found murdered after he published pictures of injured opposition party leader Morgan Tsvangirai.

Lately, as cholera rages, famine spreads and inflation skyrockets, law enforcement services have been even more brutal. In December, former reporter and peace activist Jestina Mukoko and journalist Shadreck Manyere were abducted from their homes and held for weeks before receiving a hearing. Organizations like the Committee to Protect Journalists are using the recent power-sharing deal with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to call for increased media freedoms in Zimbabwe, and especially for the release of detainees in situations like Mukoko's or Manyere's. But it is unclear when — or if — Zimbabwe's repressive climate will change.

It didn't always used to be this way. Magwenya used to work for the Daily News, an independent newspaper in Harare banned in 2003 when it refused to tell Central Intelligence Officers (CIO) where it got its funding. John Dube\*, a former Daily News correspondent now working for the independent news agency ZimOnline, recalls the police breaking into the Daily News headquarters. "They were heavily armed. Someone is pointing a gun at you and asking you questions.'

Since then, Daily News reporters have either had to leave the country to find jobs or turn to freelance stringing for foreign media or online outlets — unless they want to work for a local paper dedicated to the state. "The local media has no objectivity. You have to toe the party line or you'll get banned. It's happened so many times," Magwenya said.

Magwenya himself secretly works as a stringer for CNN and has approximately 20 colleagues in Harare who do the same work for other major Western media outlets. Not only is he free to express himself in his dispatches however he likes, but he also gets paid by wire transfer in U.S. dollars, vital to purchasing groceries and other goods as the Zimbabwean dollar has become worthless.

But reporting for foreign news services is far from the ideal job. For a journalist in the land of chaos, the fear of being arrested is all too real, and the possibility of

an arbitrary jail sentence — or even torture — is terrifying. Though most are accredited and are doing nothing illegal, independent journalists have been known to wind up injured, missing or dead.

#### **BANDING TOGETHER:**

Later that week, Magwenya takes us to a legal hearing that Mukoko and Manyere finally obtain after weeks of illegal detention and torture. Manyere is a fellow journalist and friend, and Magwenya is concerned

Almost immediately upon entering the building, Magwenya ignores us and goes to sit with the other journalists. Because we are foreign, he does not want to be seen with us. We are not accredited, and Western journalists have been arrested and deported (like Barry Bearak of the New York Times). At the very least, journalists are often followed by police. Magwenya's instinct is proven correct. Throughout the eight-hour day at the courthouse, various informers sneak around behind us, and intelligence officers with guns eye us up and down.

Mukoko and Manyere are represented by several lawyers from Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), a foreignfunded association of attorneys contracted to handle human rights cases in Zimbabwe. They have handled most, if not all, of cases involving media workers in the past few years — around 15 in total — and are proud to say that no one has been convicted in court, although plenty have been detained illegally. The lawyers argue these cases at a heavily discounted rate for journalists, and either the journalist's employers or the local chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa usually pays the remainder of the

The star of the legal team is Beatrice Mtetwa, a spirited fighter from Harare, unafraid to speak her mind. At one point, she openly denounced Mugabe's government as a "rogue state" in a courtroom full of intelligence officers, which was met with stifled laughter from the reporters' corner. "I get in trouble from time to time," Mtetwa admits. Last year she was even beaten with truncheons by the police.

A recent power-sharing deal between Mugabe's ZANU-PF party and main opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC could create an impetus for change. But when asked if the deal will bring new media freedoms to Zimbabwe, Mtetwa says it is too early to tell, but she hopes that the MDC will take media repression issues seriously and push for a more independent judiciary that can act to protect journalists.

Magwenya and Dube are less optimistic. Dube indicates that he is uncomfortable with the new agreement and unsure what the MDC will do with its newfound power. "It's not like since the agreement happened now independent newspapers are ready to start publishing again," he insists. "It will take a very long time."

Time seems to be a variable no one in Zimbabwe can calculate. Magwenya says that detainees can be incarcerated for anywhere from a few days to nine weeks to longer. In reference to the photographer murdered last year, he adds, "The regime is capable of doing anything.'

Magwenya constantly keeps that thought in mind. There is no part of his day that does not involve some sort of covert movement designed to keep the police and the CIO at bay. When he leaves his house in the morning, he takes one road through town, but makes sure to take a different road home.



If he is reporting from a certain location - anywhere from an aid site to a prison to a slum — he will not go there more than once per week. Any interviews he conducts are behind closed doors, and any names he uses are routinely fake. Dube tells a similar story, adding that sometimes the CIO will tail journalists in their cars and try to cause

Worried about their security situation, some reporters have created an informal union of freelance journalists in Harare. Dube says the union has a system in place where its 35 members check on each other's locations daily to ensure that everybody is always safe. "Sometimes if someone is doing an exclusive story," Dube says, "he can borrow a car from one of the others to throw off the police. We also will sometimes travel together as two or three, so that someone can always be on the lookout for people following."

#### A STRESSFUL LIFE

As we leave the courthouse in Magwenya's car, we notice that a CIO officer who had been staring at us outside is in the car behind us. For a minute, all of our hearts beat a little faster until he turns at the next light. Sighing in relief, Magwenya heads toward his apartment so he can file a dispatch on the day.

Magwenya tells us about a time he narrowly escaped detention at an opposition event by bribing his guard with beer money and then sneaking away. "Everyone drinks beer here," he explains as he pops open one of his own. "Life is stressful in Zimbabwe."

Still shaken from the courthouse incident, it's easy for us to see why.

\*Names have been changed for security purposes.

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# Liberating the Bricks in the Wall

Everywhere All The Time: A New Deschooling Reader EDITED BY MATT HERN AK PRESS, 2008

It's impossible to read Everywhere All The Time without Pink Floyd's "Another Brick in the Wall" racing through your head: "We don't need no education/We don't need no thought control/Teachers! Leave them kids alone."

Anyone who's attended public school knows that formal education is far less inspiring than it might be. Rote memorization, a bevy of standardized tests, a near-pathological focus on order and discipline ... well, you know. You've likely been there.

But what are the alternatives? Matt Hern, a Canadian antischooling activist, has compiled a 37-essay anthology that asks — but unfortunately doesn't satisfactorily answer — the questions that need to be posed. For example, why do nearly one-third of U.S. students leave high school before graduating? Why do we act as if education happens only in classrooms? Why not, instead, focus on the learning that takes place everywhere, all the time?

Lastly, why do we privilege book learning over apprenticeships or less-academic skill sharing?

While many of the essays in Everywhere All The Time are antischooling rants, others are more thoughtful. Disagreements run rife. Some contributors hail Brazilian educator Paolo Freire as an inspiration; others, like Gustavo Esteva, Madhu Suri Prakash and Dana L. Stuchal, deride him as undemocratic and conservative, an unwitting colonizer. Their critique rests of Freire's belief that teachers enhance the common good. "Freire assumes that the oppression suffered by the oppressed has disabled them," his critics write. "The mediator must endow the oppressed with both awareness and conscience."

Okay, perhaps this is fair, but I don't see it. Maybe it's because I'm a teacher, but I can't help wondering how the illiterate or barely-literate can effect their liberation without the basic tools of survival, which in the 21st century include reading, writing and calculating. Sure, folks can educate one another, sharing a wealth of social and emotional experiences, but at some point they'll hit barriers that keeps them out of the job market and separate them from main-

stream society. Does that matter? I believe that it does.

The book's most interesting section centers on descriptions of actual alternative programs, including home schooling. Although it ignores the tens of thousands of ultra-conservative Christian home schoolers who balk at contact with secular authorities and whose instructors teach little beyond religious dogma and rightwing theology, the essays posit non-classroom learning as viable and exiting.

In "Democratic Education in Israel," U.S. educators Chris Balme and Dana Bennis describe an intriguing set-up in which students are paired with "honechim," advisors/counselors/mentors/cheerleaders who not only monitor the student's academic progress, but also attend to emotional health. There are no required classes and self-direction is the order of the day. A youth-led Parliament consisting of students, staff and parents meets weekly to arbitrate disagreements and govern the school. Open to Arabs and Jews and subsidized by the state, alternative schools educate 0.5 percent of Israel's student body.

That said, I wanted more. What do they do when issues of Pales-

ABST ABST

tinian sovereignty crop up? Do the non-violent conflict resolution strategies they employ ever spill over into civilian life? What happens when graduates enter the Israeli military?

Other alternative programs — largely private and requiring the payment of tuition — demonstrate that schools can deviate

from the one-size-fits-all learning that currently dominates both primary and secondary education. Clearly, if we truly want no child left behind, we need to conjure new models. The trick is coming up with something that works in the cash-strapped real world.

—Eleanor J. Bader



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## **Jacking in to the Future**

Sleep Dealer
Directed By Alex Rivera
A Likely Story Production, 2009

hen the Cruz family's farm in Santa Ana del Rio, Oaxaca, is destroyed and the head of the family killed, young Memo Cruz (Luis Fernando Peña) leaves for Tijuana, the "city of the future." He hopes to get work in one of the Tijuana factories in which Mexican work-

ers operate equipment hundreds of miles away, via remote controls plugged directly into "nodes" — jacks that connect to the workers' nervous systems.

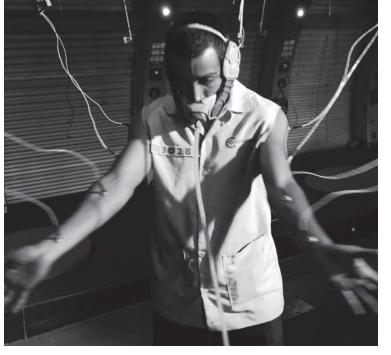
It's the near future, the U.S.-Mexico border is closed, and the United States has "what it's always wanted: work without workers." Technology has made telecommuting to the assembly line as feasible as telecommuting to the "Help" desk. Goods are produced and buildings erected

in U.S. factories and construction sites by robots controlled by Mexicans working 12-hour shifts in the sweatshops, which are called "sleep dealers" for the frequency in which workers fall asleep at the controls in a tangle of wires that can send current coursing through their bodies.

That's the barely science-fiction premise of first-time writer-director Alex Rivera's richly imagined new film. Sleep Dealer is the story of what happens to Memo in Tijuana, and of Luz Martinez (Leonor Varela), the writer he meets there, and Rudy Ramirez (Jacob Vargas), the Mexican-American soldier whose life has touched theirs in ways they can't imagine.

In this future, the U.S. armed forces fight via the same remote controls the "sleep dealer" workers use, policing the world on behalf of U.S.-owned enterprises and protecting them from "terrorists." The nodes are fiction — so far, anyway — and Rudy was the remote-control pilot of the drone plane that killed Memo's father.

Rudy discovers the consequences of his bombing mission when he sees Memo's story, posted by Luz on the reality website she writes for. Writers, too, have nodes in *Sleep Dealer*; Luz sells her memories along with her words. Memo's account is all the more affecting because Luz's "readers" can see



APRIL 17 – MAY 14, 2009 THE INDYPENDENT

## **A Glimpse From the Belly of the Beast**



Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners V. the USA BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL CITY LIGHTS, 2009

'n Mumia Abu-Jamal's latest book, the award-winning jour-Lnalist, former Black Panther and current death row inmate introduces us to the world of jailhouse lawyers - inmates who, despite lacking formal legal education and sometimes even basic literacy at first, mount legal defenses for themselves and other prisoners. The need for jailhouse lawyers arises from a criminal justice system whose scales of justice have always been tipped against defendants from disenfranchised classes and especially African Americans.

Frustrated by inept court-appointed attorneys, many prisoners took it upon themselves to redress mistreatment in prison and even mount appeal cases; their work has led to the reform of statewide policies and has sometimes meant the difference between life and death.

Abu-Jamal has spent and the last three decades behind bars — much of it on death row — and the book is largely based on his experiences helping other inmates. His legal work has earned him the recognition of the National Lawyers Guild, for whom he serves as a vice president of it's co-jailhouse lawyer committee.

But the heart of the book is the stories Abu-Jamal tells of jailhouse lawyers who fought for creating legal protection for those engaged in the field. Legally-sanctioned punishment for jailhouse lawyering formally ended with the 1969 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Johnson V. Avery*. However, those engaged in the field continue to be targeted for their work. A 1991 study revealed that jailhouse lawyers were more likely to be reprimanded than any other prison population.

Bill Clinton's 1996 Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), which sought to stop frivolous lawsuits against prisons, rolled back many of the protections that jailhouse lawyers and inmates had won over previous decades — the book makes a powerful case for its repeal. "Is it surprising," Abu-Jamal asks, "that a nation that began its existence with Slave Codes, then continued for a century with an equally repressive set of Black Codes, would institute ... Prison Codes? Such is the stuff American law is made of today."

While much of the world was appalled by the revelations of torture and prisoner abuse at Guantánamo

Bay and Abu Ghraib, those aware of the conditions inside U.S. prisons were not. The same tactics and abuses have long been carried out domestically, largely against African Americans and Latinos. Were Gitmo-level abuses exposed within a U.S. prison, explains Abu-jamal, the PLRA would prevent the victim from seeking damages.

Abu-Jamal has long helped galvanize millions worldwide to not only protest the U.S. death penalty, but also rally against the prison-industrial complex. His latest work makes an invaluable contribution towards understanding those resisting it from behind bars; this book offers a rare glimpse into the hidden world and history of jailhouse lawyers.

Despite the U.S. Supreme Court's rejection April 6 of Abu-Jamal's appeal for a new trial, he continues to fight for his freedom. This would not have been possible without the support of millions worldwide. He reminds the reader of the more than two million Americans behind bars in similar situations to himself, and that those in the free world have a responsibility to those trapped "in the bowels of the slave ship, in the hidden dank dungeons of America."

—Jaisal Noor

Memo's stricken face as he describes the events surrounding his father's death. Stricken with guilt, Rudy takes a leave from the Air Force and comes to Tijuana to search for Memo.

Sleep Dealer puts human faces onto two facets of globalization — the new opportunities it offers global capital for exploitation, and the new chances global communications offer the rest of us to join together and resist that exploitation. But the movie is years behind in its gender politics There are few women in

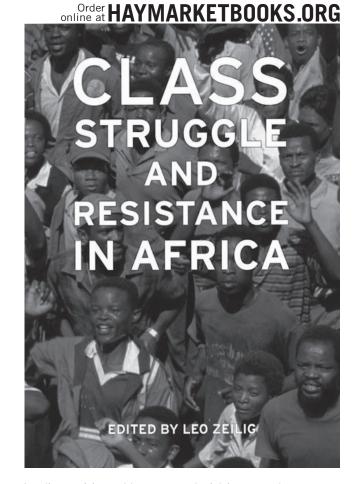
Rivera's Mexico, and except for Luz, the few that do appear are nearly mute. At moments during the movie, I thought wistfully of another film about Mexican workers and U.S. industry: Salt of the Earth, the 1954 account by Hollywood-Ten director Herbert Biberman of a New Mexico mining strike. In Salt of the Earth, events force the women of the community into unaccustomed — and transformative — leadership. Sleep Dealer could have used some of that film's attitude.

That said, Sleep Dealer is a rar-

ity, a movie that engages head-on the life of workers under capitalism. Doing it in the context of globalization was an obvious choice; throwing in Mexican-American relations and the United States as a world police force might have been over-ambitious, but it works. A little polemical, more than a little sexist, it's nevertheless often touching and definitely worth seeing for its take on the potential futures of globalization.

—Judith Mahoney Pasternak



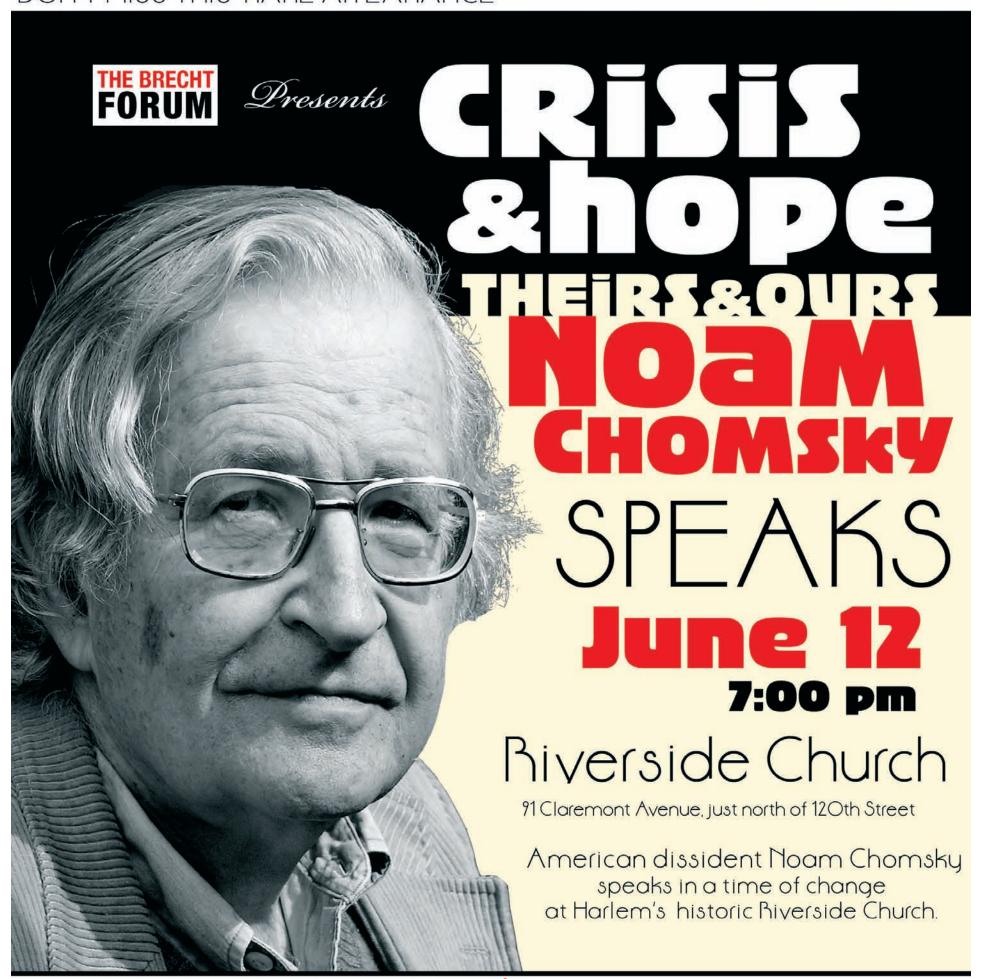


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